

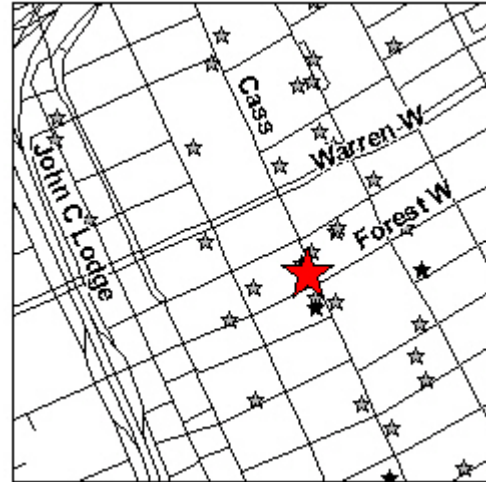
## **Wayne State University Historic District**

4735-4841 Cass Avenue

Local		
State	✓	1/19/57
State Marker	✓	10/21/58
National	✓	6/23/78



**Old Main**  
Photo courtesy of DetroitPix



### **Historic overview:**

This historic district is a symbol of the University's overall growth and development, and tradition of adapting a variety of dissimilar structures to academic uses. It is also significant for the architecture of each of its individual components.

Wayne State is located in an urban environment and its enrollment has always outpaced its capital improvements. Therefore it has adapted existing structures, many of them residential, to academic and office uses. Some of these converted buildings have become an integral part of campus tradition. For example, the main administration building, Mackenzie Hall used to be a hotel, and is Romanesque in style. The Hilberry Theater is a former church, and one of the first Neo-Classical Revival structures in the city. The largest building in the historic district is Old Main, erected in 1896 to house Detroit Central High School.

Wayne State University traces its beginnings to the founding of the Detroit Medical College in 1868, yet it evolved most directly from the junior college courses added to the curriculum of Detroit's Central High School in 1913. In 1906, 4735 Cass was purchased by David Mackenzie for his home. A Detroit native, Mackenzie graduated from the University of Michigan, and was one of the first 5 students to be elected to its Phi Beta Kappa honorary society. He served as principal of Central High and was fundamental in establishing the Junior College courses there.

Eventually, the Junior College became the College of the City of Detroit in 1923. Growth was slow during the 1930s, but the school experienced an enrollment boom following World War II, which continued into the 1970s. Today Wayne State is well known for excellence in theater education.

